

Message Text

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65

ACTION AF-06

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02

INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

USIA-06 ACDA-05 OMB-01 /071 W

----- 013424

R 051326Z MAR 76

FM AMEMBASSY LAGOS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3724

INFO AMEMBASSY ABIDJAN

AMEMBASSY ACCRA

AMEMBASSY CONAKRY

AMEMBASSY COTONOU

AMEMBASSY LIBREVILLE

AMEMBASSY LOME

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY NDJAMENA

AMEMBASSY NIAMEY

AMEMBASSY YAOUNDE

AMCONSUL IBADAN

AMCONSUL KADUNA

C O N F I D E N T I A L LAGOS 2740

FOLLOWING TEL SENT ACTION AMEMBASSY LAGOS INFO AMCONSUL KADUNA
FROM AMCONSUL IBADAN AND REPEATED FOR YOUR INFO (01 MAR TEL)

QUOTE

C O N F I D E N T I A L IBADAN 0137

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS, PINT, NI, US

SUBJECT: SPECULATIONS ON FEBRUARY 13 COUP ATTEMPT

1. SEVERAL THOUGHTFUL SOURCES WITHIN PROFESSIONAL AND
BUSINESS COMMUNITY HERE WITH WHOM WE HAVE TALKED OVER
PAST WEEK BELIEVE FEBRUARY 13 COUP ATTEMPT STEMMED

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FROM TWO INDIGENOUS CIRCUMSTANCES (A) BOTH OF WHICH ARE
STILL VERY MUCH WITH US; AND (B) NEITHER OF WHICH

HAD ANYTHING TO DO WITH CIA, OTHER AMERICANS, MARTIN LEQUESNE, OTHER BRITISH OR PARTICIPATION GOWON AND OTHER EX-REGIME OFFICIALS.

2. MOST PROBABLY CAUSES OF DIMKA'S ATTEMPT ARE (A) FEELING AMONG ARMY OFFICERS FROM MIDDLEBELT-MINORITY TRIBES THAT, AS RESULT JULY 29 COUP, THEY WERE RAPIDLY LOSING THE MEASURE OF SECURITY AND INFLUENCE THE MIDDLEBELT HAD GAINED AS RESULT JULY 1966 COUP; AND THAT THEIR INFLUENCE AS BROKER BETWEEN NORTHERN AND SOUTHERN FACTIONS IN ARMY WAS RAPIDLY DISAPPEARING; AND (B) RECENT PROMOTIONS OF TOP OFFICERS WHICH ANGERED (A) MANY MIDDLE-GRADE OFFICERS BECAUSE THEY WERE NOT MOVE UP AT SAME TIME, WHILE SOME TOP BRASS GOT DOUBLE PROMOTIONS; (II) TRADITIONALISTS INSIDE MILITARY SERVICES WHO CONSIDERED MOHAMMED'S, OBASANJO'S AND DANJUMA'S PREDATED COUPLE PROMOTIONS A SCANDAL; (III) MIDDLEBELT OFFICERS WHO FELT, IN ADDITION TO (I) AND (II) THAT MIDDLEBELT MINORITIES DID NOT FIGURE PROMINENTLY ENOUGH IN PROMOTIONS THAT WERE MADE, FUELING THEIR SUSPICIONS OF CONSPIRACY TO BREAK MIDDLEBELT POWER TO VETO NATIONAL POLICIES AND (PERHAPS MORE IMPORTANTLY) FUTURE MILITARY PROMOTIONS.

3. ATTEMPT RESTORE GOWON VERY PROBABLY MADE WITHOUT HIS ENCOURAGEMENT, AND PROBABLY WITHOUT HIS KNOWLEDGE, BY FELLOW MIDDLEBELTER DIMKA WHO (A) WAS NOT CLOSE TO GOWON BUT IDOLIZED HIM; (B) THOUGHT OF GARBA AND DANJUMA AS TRAITORS TO MIDDLEBELT CAUSE; AND (C) THOUGH EX-GOVERNORS AND OTHER DISCREDITED OFFICIALS HAD MORE POPULAR ARMY SUPPORT AND WILLINGNESS TO BACK COUP THAN TURNED OUT TO BE THE CASE. DIMKA LIVED IN A FANTASY LAND IN WHICH HE EXPECTED POWERFUL ELEMENTS, PERHAPS NONE OF WHOM KNEW HIS PLANS, TO BE GRATEFULLY RESTORED TO POWER. COUP ATTEMPT BECAME EXERCISE IN THUD AND BLUNDER.

4. BETTING SEEMS TO BE EVEN THAT OBASANJO CAN LAST IN TOP OFFICE MORE THAN TWO MONTHS. PNMANTS ARE
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NOT CONGRATULATING SELVES ON HAVING FIRST YORUBA HEAD OF STATE BECAUSE (A) MIDDLEBELT DISSATISFACTION HAS BEEN HEIGHTENED BY AFTERMATH ATTEMPTED COUP, E.G., BY HARADUA'S PROMOTION TO SECOND SLOT IN HIERARCHY; (B) WIDE-SPREAD PLOTTING AGAINST OBASANJO REGIME BELIEVED TO BE GOING ON WITHIN ARMY RANKS; (C) OBASANJO IS NO LONGER A YORUBAMA, BUT AS DETRIBALIZED NOBODY WHO IS HOSTAGE TO NORTHERN INTERESTS.

5. COMMENT: ADDED UP, I GET THE IMPRESSION LOCALLY OF

A FRAGILE FMG, LITTLE SUPPORT FOR OBASANJO EVEN AMONG HIS OWN TRIBESMEN, AND THE POSSIBILITY OF ANOTHER OR SERIES OF COUP ATTEMPTS-LEADING PERHAPS TO AN EVEN LESSER VOMMON DENOMINATOR OF POLITICAL SOPHISTICATION TO OBASANJO OR ANY LIKELY SUCCESSOR TO BLAME LOCAL PROBLEMS ON WESTERN FOREIGNERS CAN BECOME IRRESISTIBLE.

6. SQUABBLE OVER PROMOTIONS IN ARMY THAT WOULD LEAD TO COUP ATTEMPT AND ASSASSINATION HEAD OF STATE SOUNDS THIN AT FIRST READING. ASSESSMENT, HOWEVER, MUST ENCOMPASS (1) BRITISH MILITARY TRAINING-WHICH EQUATES IN NIGERIAN ARMY MENTALITY LACK OF PROMOTION WITH PERSONAL FAILURE AND DECLINE PRESTIGE; (2) POPULAR EQUATION OF "BIG MAN" WITH EXPECTATION TRIBAL BENEFITS; AND (3) IN THIS CASE, LONG EXPLOITED AND NEGLECTED MINORITY TRIBES FROM MIDDLEBELT, WHO FELT THEY HAD ADEQUATE REPRESENTATION FOR FIST TIME IN HISTORY UNDER GOWON REGIME.
BARR UNQUOTE

ADDITIONAL EMBASSY TEXT FOR REPEAT ADDRESSEES:

COMMENT: TROOP MOVEMENTS IN LAGOS TEND TO SUBSTANTIATE REPORTS OF FMG MISTRUST FOR MIDDLE BELTERS. BRIGADE OF GUARDS (WITH HEAVY CONCENTRATION OF MIDDLE BELTERS) FORMERLY STATIONED AT DODAN BARRACKS AND BONNY CAMP (VICTORIA ISLAND), REPORTEDLY DEPLOYED BY TRAIN TO DADUNA. CONVOY OF ARMED TROOPS WITH WIVES AND CHILDREN, APPARENTLY COMING FROM DODAN BARRACKS, PASSED EMBASSY MARCH 2. SOLDIERS WERE IN GOOD SPIRITS, SMILING AND
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WAVING AT BYSTANDERS. SIMULTANEOUSLY, NEW AS YET UNIDENTIFIED BATTALION-SIZED UNIT CAMPET IN TENTS ON VICTORIA ISLAND.
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